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LETTER DATED 29 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to enclose the statement of the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (the Contact Group) following their meeting in London on 29 January 1999.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jeremy GREENSTOCK

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Annex

Statement by the Contact Group issued in London on 29 January 1999

1. Contact Group Ministers met in London on 29 January to consider the critical situation in Kosovo, which remains a threat to peace and security in the region, raising the prospect of a humanitarian catastrophe.

2. Despite the intensive efforts of the international community, violence remains a daily occurrence in Kosovo. Ministers unreservedly condemned the massacre of Kosovo Albanians at Racak, which resulted in several thousand people fleeing their homes. The escalation in violence - for which both Belgrade's security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) are responsible - must be stopped. Repression of civilians by the security forces must end and those forces must be withdrawn. Ministers of the Contact Group deplore the failure of the parties to make progress towards a political settlement, and cannot accept that this should permit the crisis to continue. Time is of the essence in reaching a solution, and the Contact Group is therefore assuming its responsibility.

3. Ministers called on both sides to end the cycle of violence and to commit themselves to a process of negotiation leading to a political settlement. To that end, the Contact Group:

(a) Insisted that the parties accept that the basis for a fair settlement must include the principles set out by the Contact Group;

(b) Considered that the proposals drafted by the negotiators contained the elements for substantial autonomy for Kosovo and asked the negotiators to refine them further to serve as the framework for agreement between the parties;

(c) Recognized that the work done by the negotiators had identified the limited number of points that required final negotiation between the parties;

(d) Agreed to summon representatives from the Federal Yugoslav and Serbian Governments and representatives of the Kosovo Albanians to Rambouillet by 6 February, under the co-chairmanship of Hubert Vedrine and Robin Cook, to begin negotiations with the direct involvement of the Contact Group. The Contact Group recognized the legitimate rights of other communities within Kosovo. In the context of these negotiations, it will work to ensure that their interests are fully reflected in a settlement;

(e) Agreed that the participants should work to conclude negotiations within seven days. The negotiators should then report to Contact Group Ministers, who will assess whether the progress made justifies a further period of less than one week to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

4. The Contact Group demanded that the parties seize this opportunity to reach a settlement offering peace to the people of Kosovo. The Contact Group praised the present role of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission in working to reduce tensions in Kosovo and create the conditions for political dialogue, and recognized the continuing role of the Mission. The Contact Group recognized that continuing international engagement would be necessary to help the parties implement a settlement and rebuild the shattered province. It required that the parties accept the level and nature of international presence deemed appropriate by the international community.

5. In the meantime, the Contact Group demands that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:

(a) Stop all offensive actions/repression in Kosovo;

(b) Comply fully with the OSCE/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreements and relevant Security Council resolutions;

(c) Promote the safe return of all those who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of the conflict. This includes bringing much-needed relief to Kosovo;

(d) Cooperate fully with OSCE and permit the Kosovo Verification Mission and its Chief of Mission to continue to carry out their responsibilities unhindered;

(e) Cooperate fully with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as required by relevant Security Council resolutions;

(f) Conduct a full investigation of Racak with the participation of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, allowing the Chief Prosecutor and Tribunal investigators to enter and work in Kosovo to participate in the investigation of the massacre;

(g) Identify and suspend the Yugoslav Army/Serbian Special Police officers operating in Racak at the time of the massacre until the results of the investigation become available;

(h) Mitigate the sentences of those imprisoned in connection with the conflict and provide due process to all detainees.

6. The Contact Group emphasized that compliance with Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) and 1203 (1998) applied equally to the Kosovo Albanians. It condemned all provocations by the KLA, which could only fuel the cycle of violence, and insisted that all hostages should be released. The Contact Group believes that the framework it has set out meets the legitimate aspirations of the Kosovo Albanians and demands that their leaders rally behind negotiations to reach a settlement and end provocative actions which would impede the political process.

7. The Contact Group asked Robin Cook to travel to Belgrade and Pristina to transmit these messages to the parties.

8. The future of the people of Kosovo is in the hands of leaders in Belgrade and Kosovo. They must commit themselves now to complete the negotiations on a political settlement within 21 days to bring peace to Kosovo. The Contact Group will hold both sides accountable if they fail to take the opportunity now offered to them, just as the Group stands ready to work with both sides to realize the benefits for them of a peaceful solution.